



# NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: State Policy Leaders  
National Policy Leaders

FROM: Doug Christensen, Ph.D.  
Commissioner of Education

RE: Validity of Nebraska's Assessment - STARS

DATE: August 31, 2005

The body of evidence from independent researchers who have found our system of assessment valid and reliable continues to grow. Last summer, the National Council of Measurement in Education (NCME) devoted their entire summer issue to a review of STARS. The conclusion: STARS is both **reliable and valid** and represents a powerful tool for improving teaching and learning.

Last fall, the U.S. Department of Education issued a publication entitled "[The Road to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning.](#)" The publication identifies Nebraska's STARS as "**the Nation's most innovative assessment system**" and is cited as a system designed to assess 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge and skills.

You may also be interested in an organization called FairTest, the National Center for Fair & Open Testing. In May, 2004, they released their study of NCLB entitled *Failing our Children: How No Child Left Behind Undermines Quality and Equity in Education*. See [http://www.fairtest.org/Failing\\_Our\\_Children\\_Report.html](http://www.fairtest.org/Failing_Our_Children_Report.html). This report cited Nebraska's Student-based, Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS) as a "**superior model for improving schools.**"

The most recent study was conducted by Dr. Susan Brookhart of Duquesne University (Pennsylvania). [The Quality of Local District Assessments Used in Nebraska's School-Based Teacher-Led Assessment and Reporting System \(STARS\)](#) was published in [Educational Measurement: Issues & Practices](#) (Summer 2005).

The article is attached. However, the conclusion of Dr. Brookhart is "**the quality of mathematics assessments used in Nebraska STARS was good overall. The majority were of high quality on characteristics that go to validity . . .**"

In fact, Dr. Brookhart concluded that the assessments ". . . **were of sufficient . . . [quality] to warrant attention to their results.** Further . . . Nebraska can be confident about the accuracy of . . . [determining] . . . the percentage of students above and below the Progressing/Proficient cutpoints . . ."

## State Board of Education

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